

Dallas 'Exposés' Deflated

An Eyewitness - and Marksman -
Heard Just Three Shots and
Scoffs at Monstrous 'Plot'

By Merriman Smith

Dean of the White House correspondents corps, Merriman Smith of United Press International won the 1964 Pulitzer Prize for his eyewitness reporting of the Kennedy assassination three years ago Tuesday.

MANY AMERICANS, and apparently even more foreigners, persist in the almost mystic belief that there is much more to be told about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. This belief has been fed by a steadily increasing list of books, magazine articles, statements and lectures which challenge proceedings of the Warren Commission set up by President Johnson to investigate the slaying that took place in Dallas Nov. 22, 1963.

From this torrent of words spread tributaries of rumor: that President Kennedy really is alive and the man shot in Dallas was a double; that Lee Harvey Oswald had conspirators, even one or more riflemen who fired at the same time he did; that Oswald was an FBI man, a CIA man, a Russian spy, a Castro agent; that Jack Ruby was a triggerman who, with the bumbling help of the Dallas police, silenced Oswald, and so on, into even wilder flights of speculation.

None of this mixture of theory and hokum appears to have any basis of provable fact, but that has not stopped the clamor.

A Profit Motive

SOME CRITICS of the Commission, its procedures and findings are quite serious scholars who have dredged the voluminous evidence to assemble minor flaws into what would appear to be one or more larger errors.

Other self-appointed authorities on the case seem to be outright entrepreneurs bent on making a profit from a sad situation. And there seems to be profit of a sort for just about everybody who tackles the subject between

book covers or from the lecture platform. In one case, destroyed, preliminary notes, in one case, destroyed, that FBI reports were altered.

Part of this profitable public acceptance comes from the fact that Mr. Kennedy continues to be a fascinating subject to millions of Americans and many more overseas. Some publishers estimate that more than 20,000 Americans will buy any book relating to the late President.

Continuing deep interest in and grief for the fallen young leader and shock over the manner of his death have combined to create a climate ideal for rumor-breeding, an atmosphere of support for challenging questions aimed at the Warren Commission, almost as if discrediting the investigation might somehow undo the tragedy of Dallas.

Many questions about the assassination and the resulting investigation are, according to U.S. News & World Report, "nagging doubts raised by enterprising authors which seem to find an especially receptive audience abroad." Major Parisian newspapers assigned top men and many columns of space to the subject. The Times of London has called for reopening of the Commission investigation to examine recently raised points of criticism. At least one Congressman, Rep. Theodore R. Kupferman (R-N.Y.), wants Congress to set up a joint committee to determine whether a full-scale legislative investigation of the Commission is warranted. There is doubt that this will be done.

The General Indictment

CRITICS OF the Warren Commission incline generally to the theory that it erred seriously in concluding that Oswald acted alone in killing Kennedy; that there was insufficient study of the possibility that others were involved in a conspiracy; that even in the brief period between the Kennedy slaying and Oswald's own death, Oswald was deprived of proper counsel; that reports by doctors who performed the autopsy

(Editor's note: Questioning of the official autopsy findings was renewed this month when 65 photographs and X-rays of the autopsy were turned over to the National Archives by the Kennedy family. Critics objected to the conditions attached, which were that the photos and X-ray records could be made available for the first five years only to Federal agencies and then only to qualified pathologists.)

(In his news conference Nov. 4, President Johnson said he knew of no "new evidence" in this material or elsewhere to challenge the Warren Commission findings. He thought it was right that the material turned over to the National Archives should not be displayed in "every sewing circle" by people with no serious purpose.)

(Prior to the President's comment, the Justice Department had announced that the pictures and X-rays were examined by the two Navy doctors who participated in the autopsy and these physicians said they corroborated their testimony to the Warren Commission.)

Oswald Pinpointed

THE COMMISSION, set up under Mr. Johnson's Executive Order Nov. 29, 1963, under Chief Justice Warren, was intended to avoid overlapping inquiries by state and local authorities while arriving at the truth about the murder of a President. Composed of men of unassailable integrity and with the Government's entire investigative resources at its command, the Commission on Sept. 27, 1964, submitted a 900-page report, backed up by six million words of supporting testimony and exhibits contained in 28 volumes.

The Commission came to the conclusion that Mr. Kennedy was killed by shots fired by Oswald from the Texas School Book Depository building in Dallas, and by these shots alone.